

Co-operator Ian McLaren (1947 – 2015)

David Griffiths

Governance Adviser/Officer for the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd 2005 – 2015 and former Secretary of Co-operatives Australia and Co-operatives Victoria.

2017

A co-operative is an interdependent construct of members, board and staff. The relationships can change but they remain interdependent and unless this is recognised, then, the co-operative and co-operation is undermined.



Left to right: SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd Governance Adviser/Officer David Griffiths. General Manager Ian McLaren and the then Chairperson and member director Shirley Faram.

This is a brief tribute to the role of Ian McLaren as General Manager of the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd between 2011 and 2015 and his contribution to the co-operative

and co-operation. Under Ian's leadership, SouthEast grew as a co-operative and contributed to the realisation of co-operation. While these achievements were dependent on the vision and support of the staff and directors of the co-operative, they were achieved under Ian's leadership. A manager of a co-operative has a critical role in actively and/or passively and/or opposing what is possible and achieved by a co-operative.

As a co-operative business, SouthEast annually created a surplus and increased total equity between 2011 and 2015:

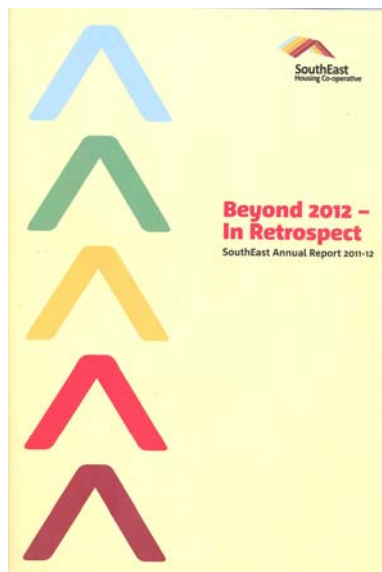
Year	End of year 30 June surplus	End of year 30 June total equity
2014-15	\$365,305	\$4,444,266
2013-14	\$353,396	\$4,078,960
2012-13	\$253,976	\$3,666,586
2011-12	\$256,876	\$3,412,610

Ian McLaren joined the staff of the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd on the 10 May 2010 as part-time Chief Financial Officer. On the 1 February 2011 he was appointed as the co-operative's General Manager. Ian continued as General Manager until 2015 when he died on the 7 July 2015. As General Manager, Ian also incorporated his previous role as Chief Financial Officer. Prior to joining SouthEast, Ian worked for CEHL, MIND and in the private sector.

In Vale Ian McLaren in the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd Housing Futures newsletter (August 2015 pp. 1 and 2) it was noted by David Griffiths: "Ian brought to the co-operative a commitment to co-operation – not an historical or legal commitment and not just experience to co-operative values and principles but an understanding of the value of co-operation between people and organisations. This instinctive co-operation worked well in the workplace and Ian's relations with the board and other organisations. Ian also served on the board of the Community Housing Federation of Victoria until 2015, Ian's instinctive co-operation was in fact compatible with co-operative values and principles and, over time, he became more familiar with the legal basis and lessons of the co-operative movement."

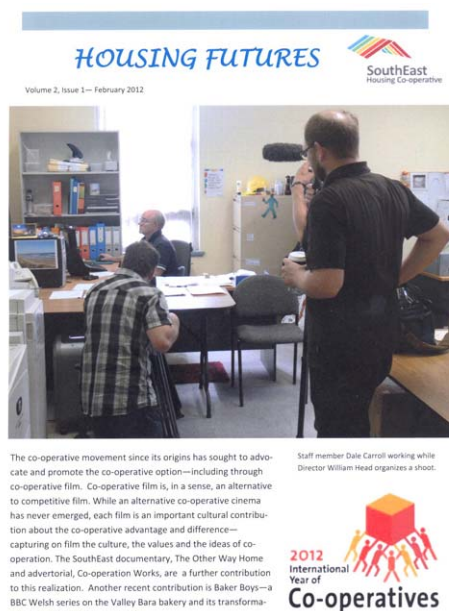
Under Ian's leadership the co-operative advanced co-operation through a series of initiatives. :

Annual Report



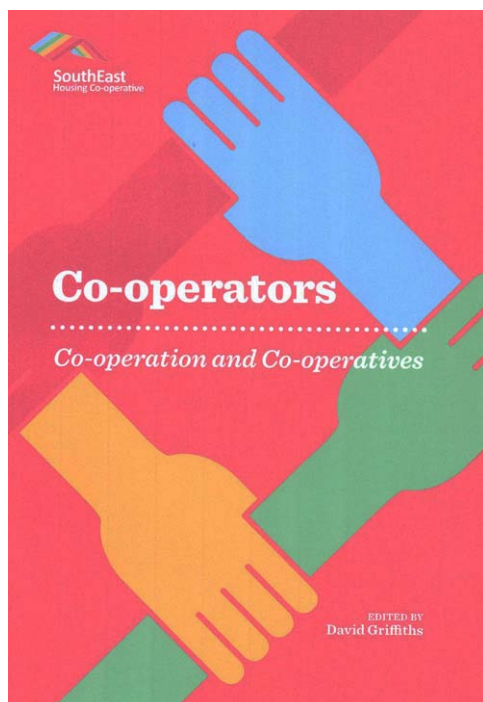
The Annual Report is the most important document published each year. Through the Annual Report a board and manager make assumptions about the level of accountability and transparency that members require and deserve. While Ian was General Manager the Annual Report included detailed analysis of the co-operative's Strategic Plan and outcomes, the risk management plan and key performance measures achieved by the co-operative compared with previous years and compared with other agencies as well as comprehensive financial reports – Statements of Profit or Loss and Other Comparative Income, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Cash Flows, Notes to the Financial Statements, Individual Auditor's Report, Auditor's Compilation Report and Detailed Statement of Profit or Loss.

Housing Futures



Throughout Ian's tenure as General Manager, the newsletter Housing Futures not only reported on the co-operative's events but also reported on housing, housing co-operatives and co-operation. The assumption was that members were co-operators and sought intelligent information e.g. the March 2015 Housing Futures (Vol 5 Issue 1) included items on Open Board Meeting, Active Income Membership, General Meeting – 18 May 2015, SouthEast Board – a Strategic Review, Wealth in the UK Downturn, Senate Committee on Housing, McClure on Housing Assistance and Australian Senate – Co-operatives and Mutuals.

Co-operators



Co-operators was published by the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd in October 2012. Copies were distributed to all participants at the Australian National Co-operative Conference, 24-25 October 2012. Co-operators is primarily a collection of contributions by members and staff of housing co-operatives writing about their experiences of co-operation and co-operatives. The contributors share a passionate commitment to the values and philosophy of co-operation. The basis for this passion lies in member user ownership and control of co-operatives. The Chief Executive and Principal of the UK Co-operative College Mervyn Wilson wrote the foreward for Co-operators. Co-operators includes a series of statements issued by Co-operatives Australia – Co-operative Education, Public Policy and Co-operatives, Valuing Co-operation and Australia's Top 100 Co-operatives, Credit Unions and Mutuals.

Co-operative Values and Principles



In 2012 SouthEast Housing Co-operative co-produced with Co-operatives Victoria and the Co-operative College of UK a series of eight short videos on co-operative values and principles featuring the Chief Executive Officer and Principal of the Co-operative College UK Mervyn Wilson – Directors, Education, Governance, International, Members, Principles, Social Enterprise and Values.

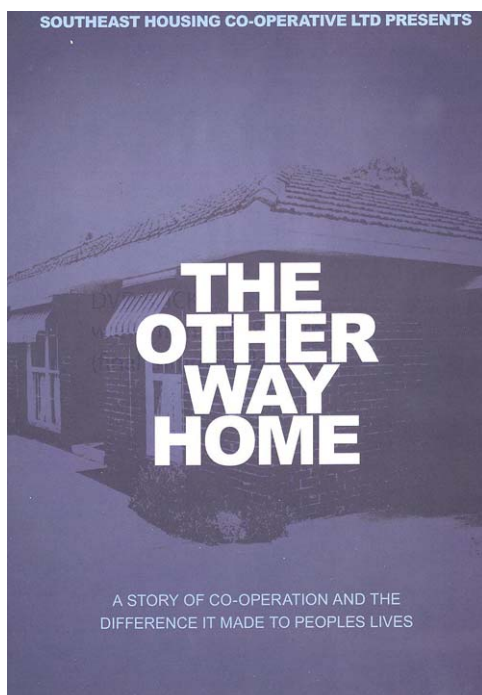
Policy Governance



Policy Governance is a system for organizational [governance](#) first developed in the 1970s by [John Carver](#). There are ten Principles of Policy Governance. Principles 1-3 define an organization's ownership, the board's responsibility to it, and the board's authority. Principles 4-7 specify that the board defines in writing policies identifying the benefits that should come about from the organization, how the board should conduct itself, and how staff behavior is to be proscribed. Principles 8-10 deal with the board's delegation and monitoring. In general, if a board applies ALL of the principles of Policy Governance in its process and decision-making, then the board is likely practicing the model. If a board applies fewer than all the principles, it

weakens or destroys the model's effectiveness as a system. Policy governance recognises the need to emphasise issues rather than personalities in a board decision-making process. The policy governance principles were incorporated in the Governance Manual and Member Manual of SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd.

The Other Way Home



The co-operative movement since its origins has sought to advocate and promote the co-operative option—including through co-operative film. Co-operative film is, in a sense, an alternative, to competitive film. While an alternative co-operative cinema has never emerged, each film is an important cultural contribution about the co-operative advantage and difference— capturing on film the culture, the values and the ideas of cooperation. The SouthEast documentary, *The Other Way Home* and advertorial, *Co-operation Works*, are a further contribution to this realization and were commissioned by SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd in 2012. . *The Other Way Home* features members and Ian McLaren discussing the importance and impact of co-operative housing. At 9 March 2015 there had been a total views of 3707 on YouTube of *The Other Way Home* (1610), *The Other Way Home* trailer (1091) and *Co-operation Works* (1006).

National Housing Conference



As part of the International Year of Co-operatives 2012, Common Equity Housing Ltd hosted a National Housing conference at Zinc, Federation Square, Melbourne, on Thursday 8 March 2012. CEHL was joined by two sponsors—bankmecu and South-East Housing Co-operative Ltd..

The conference was convened to showcase and celebrate successful housing co-operatives from Australia. SouthEast made a presentation – a panel of directors and the General Manager provided a Q & A session for conference participants to ask questions e.g. the Housing Registrar Intervention, member participation, new communication initiatives, improving member services, SouthEast and IYC 2012—what is being done and why. All conference participants received a gift bag and SouthEast contributed a brochure, a pen and a copy of The Phoenix history. The Principal and Chief Executive Officer of the UK Co-operative College, Mervyn Wilson, was the Key Note speaker. Mervyn was brought out to Australia by Co-operatives Victoria.

Conclusion

Ian McLaren was an individual who facilitated the growth of SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd as a co-operative and, therefore, strengthened co-operation. It is an admirable legacy that needs to be acknowledged. It is a tragedy that he was not able to continue to support the co-operative and co-operation. Ian's contribution demonstrated how a manager can make a difference to a co-operative when he recognises the significance of co-operative values and principles and their practice.

The Co-operative Union's **Co-operative Managers' Text Book** edited by R.J. Wilson in 1908 noted, inter alia, "How much the manager of a business is responsible for its harmonious and successful working is scarcely known to any employee and sometimes the results are even a surprise to the manager himself. But the mental and moral effects on the individual worker are assuredly very great, and although he may not be conscious of it at the time, in succeeding years, possibly in another sphere, he will realise the great benefit of the good example and the kindly discipline." (p.12)

The Text Book comments further: "Managers should try and create a co-operative atmosphere in their immediate circle, and should interest the rank and file of employees in co-operative education and work." (p 16)

The Text Book also concluded that "Co-operative employees should be well informed and broad-minded. Each should be something else besides being a competent servant. Each should have an individuality of his own, should have developed some line of study, and should be accustomed to think for himself, apart from such information as can be obtained from books. He should also be resourceful, self-reliant, capable, a thinker, and a spontaneous and enthusiastic reformer." (p 17)

Beyond and underpinning the initiatives discussed, Ian was a genuine protector of the staff of the co-operative and a particularly effective representative of the co-operative.

Ian McLaren was always more than a competent servant of the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd..

SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd Profile

30 June 2015

Name: SouthEast Housing Co-operative Limited

Registration Category: Housing Provider

Registration Date: 21 November 2008

Agency contacts

General Manager: Mr Ian McLaren

Chairperson: Ms Andrea Lee

Address: The Hub, Plaza Business Centre

Level 3, 26 to 36 McCrae St. (Palm Plaza)

Dandenong 3175 (PO Box 7141)

Office phone number: (03) 9706 8005

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SEHCOOP>

Website: www.sehc.org.au

Key Statistics as at 30 June 2015

Members: 159

Members and their families: 440

Housing properties under management: 160

Long Term - 160

Properties in agency ownership: 10

Staffing: Total - 6 Total EFT - 5.5

Annual Turnover: \$1.8 million

Assets: Total as at end of 30 June 2013 - \$4,444,266

Annual turnover for year ended 30 June 2013: \$1,725,047

Operational surplus for previous financial year 30 June 2013: \$253,976

Scope of operations

Housing: Long term affordable housing for low income households.

Profile of housing portfolio

Properties are mainly in Bentleigh East, Cheltenham, Clarinda, Clayton, Croydon, Frankston, Mooroolbark and Oakleigh.

Agency history

SouthEast was founded through the merger of the Ringwood/Croydon, Oakleigh and Frankston Co-operatives in 2000.

The Moorabbin Rental Housing Co-operative ceased trading and became part of the organisation in 2004. SouthEast is the largest Rental Housing Co-operative in Victoria.

Legal structure

SouthEast Housing Co-operative is incorporated under the Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013 No 9 of 2013

Further Reading

The co-operative's Annual Reports, newsletters, minutes of Annual General Meetings and public records of board meetings are available and can be downloaded from the co-operative's web site: At 26 June 2015 the 2013-14 and 2014-15 Annual Reports were not available on the web site.

<http://www.sehc.org.au>

Annual Report 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012 – 2013, 2013 – 2014, 2014 – 2015 and 2015-2016

General Meeting Minutes. 2011 - 2015

Griffiths, David (Ed./) Housing Futures, SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd, 2011 - 2015

Griffiths, David (Ed) Co-operators – Co-operation and Co-operatives, SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd, 2012

Griffiths, David The Phoenix - The SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd, 2010

Griffiths, David The Phoenix Reborn, Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd, 2015

<https://archive.org/details/PhoenixRebornGriffiths2015>

Housing Registrar Annual Reviews of SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd, 2012-2014

The co-operative has uploaded these reviews to its website.

Member Manual – Rights and Responsibilities, 19 October 2012

Public Records of board meetings, SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd, 2011 – 2015.

Public records were initiated from the 24 June 2011 board meeting.

Services Charter, 2011

SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd Rules, 17 November 2014